

13 September 1950

MEMORANDUM FOR: Assistant Director for Reports and Estimates  
Assistant Director for Scientific Intelligence

SUBJECT : The Consideration of U. S. Capabilities in  
Intelligence Estimates

REFERENCE : (a) Memorandum for the DCI from AD/ORE, dated  
23 August 1950, subject: Coordination of  
IM-312

1. Paragraph 3 of the reference memorandum describes an issue which the following statement of Agency policy will resolve.

2. CIA intelligence estimates will not contain assessments of U. S. capabilities, except as outlined below. Requesters should be informed of this policy whenever appropriate.

3. In estimating the current capabilities and intentions of foreign powers, U. S. capabilities in the pertinent situation should be taken into account whenever U. S. resources are either so disposed as to possess a potential tangibly and substantially affecting the situation or have actually been committed. The capabilities of foreign powers are those courses of action, positive or negative, of which they are factually capable, and which, if adopted, will affect the accomplishment of U. S. objectives either favorably or adversely. U. S. capabilities are defined in similar manner. Obviously, U. S. capabilities must be taken into account insofar as they assist in determining those courses of action of which a foreign power is factually capable. Equally obviously, those U. S. capabilities which are significant in a given situation and of which the foreign power is presumably aware must be considered in estimating his intentions, that is, the relative probability of adoption by him of those courses of action of which he is capable. Thus U. S. capabilities may be stated as assumptions or may be mentioned in discussion in intelligence estimates of a current situation whenever either treatment is required in the light of this policy statement. The prohibition given in Paragraph 2 will, however, be observed.

4. In current estimates where CIA is unable to obtain the necessary information of U. S. resources which have a potential in a situation or which have been committed, CIA will be compelled to make logical

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assumptions. Such assumptions must be clearly stated in the estimates affected. COAPS is still endeavoring to obtain full responses from the military departments to our requests that we be provided with operational information.

5. In long-range estimates, CIA may make assumptions concerning possible U. S. courses of action for the purpose of estimating their effect on particular situations. Such assumptions should be clearly stated.

/s/ R. H. HILLENKOTTER  
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